

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 2 have been amended to define more clearly over the prior art of record, and include the limitation of original claim 3, now cancelled.

The invention relates to a method and apparatus for washing a rubber blanket having ends which are clamped in a clamping channel on a blanket cylinder. According to the inventive method, a cleaning element, which is one of a cloth, a brush, and a doctor, is pressed against the cylinder as it rotates. During the initial revolutions, the cleaning element is lifted off the cylinder each time the clamping channel passes under the cleaning element. During at least one subsequent revolution, the cleaning element is pressed against the cylinder continuously.

As explained in the specification, the object of the invention is to prevent contamination of the clamping channel as the cylinder is being cleaned.

Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over Walther et al. U.S. 5,732,631 in view of Waizmann U.S. 5,385,095. This rejection is traversed for the reasons following.

Walther discloses a cleaning device 7 for a printing press cylinder 6, which includes a housing 8 having an opening 12 which faces the cylinder 6, and a nozzle 13 inside the housing for spraying abrasive particles against the cylinder. The housing is moveable from a throw-off position to a throw-on position closely adjacent to the cylinder during cleaning. See col. 3, lines 17-22. The cleaning device 7 is not moved to the throw-off position until cleaning has ended. See col. 5, lines 9-10.

During cleaning, the position of a clamping channel 6a is sensed and the supply of abrasive particles is interrupted as the channel 6a passes in front of the nozzles. See col. 3, lines 37-51, and col. 5, lines 13-18.

Figure 4 of Walther shows an embodiment having counter-rotating brushes 15 mounted on the housing. There is nothing to suggest that these brushes are withdrawn from the cylinder as the clamping channel passes.

In the paragraph bridging columns 4 and 5, mentioned by the examiner, it is stated that, "In the case of gripper bridges on the printing machine cylinder, the cleaning device is lifted out in this region". Gripper bridges are features upstanding from the surface of a sheet conveying drum. See, e.g., U.S. 5,732,628. This in no way suggests that the cleaning device is lifted as the clamping channel of a blanket cylinder passes. This should be clear from the following paragraph, which refers to "the case of printing machine cylinder 6 having at least one cylinder channel 6A".

In sum, Walther contains no suggestion to lift a cleaning device from a blanket cylinder as the clamping channel passes, wherein the cleaning device is one of a cloth, a brush, and a doctor.

Waizmann discloses a cleaning device for a cylinder in a printing machine, including a distributor 2 which directs a jet of fluid against a cylinder, and a cam-driven application bar 15 which tilts a housing 5 away from the cylinder as channel 17 passes. This opens up a flow gap 7.1, 7.2 between a labyrinth element 9.1, 9.2 and the cylinder. See col. 5, lines 38-61. There is no suggestion that the cleaning fluid distributor 2 is moved away, much less any suggestion that one of a cloth, a brush, and a doctor is moved away as the channel 17 passes.

Walther and Waizmann both recognize the problem of contaminating a channel in a cylinder, but both take different approaches than the method of the invention. Neither suggests that a cleaning element be lifted away from the cylinder as a channel passes under the element.

Claims 2 and 3 stand rejected under Walther in view of Ebina et al. U.S. 5,797,325. The latter discloses a cleaning apparatus including actuators that move a cleaning unit, which may include a cloth 36, between a throw-off position and a thrown-on position. However there is no mention of a clamping channel, and thus no suggestion that the cleaning unit be lifted as a clamping channel passes under the cloth 36.

From the foregoing, it should be apparent that the invention defined by claims 1 and 2 as presently amended is not suggested by the prior art of record nor any combination thereof. Withdrawal of the rejections and early allowance are accordingly solicited. If any objections remain, a call to the undersigned is requested.

It is believed that no fees or charges are required at this time in connection with the present application; however, if any fees or charges are required at this time, they may be charged to our Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 03-2412.

Respectfully submitted,
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